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Celebrating adoption

Trace Christenson
The Enquirer

MARSHALL — The screaming children didn't raise an eyebrow from the judges.

Only smiles.

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"This is not always the quietest of audiences," Michigan Supreme Court Justice Steven Markham said, "but this is one of the very few happy things that occur in courtrooms."

In the audience in the Calhoun County Building in Marshall, children squirmed and at least a few adults looked ready for an end to the speeches.

When the words stopped, 10 families, one by one, adopted 14 children during the fourth annual Adoption Day, held in Calhoun County as part of a statewide program.

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Trace Christenson/The Enquirer

Shawn Denton of Bellevue holds his son, Damon, during adoption proceedings. Denton and his wife, Samantha, adopted Damon and his sister, Gracie, on Tuesday.

For more information

Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange: 800-589-6273 or www.michigan.gov/dhs

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In 36 Michigan counties, 235 adoptions were completed, according to the State Court Administrator's office. The state began holding public ceremonies to promote and provide attention to adoptions.

Dave Stevens, an adoption specialist with the Department of Human Services in Calhoun County, said some people have become interested in adoption after hearing about the public ceremonies.

"But we need more adoptive families," he said.

Markham noted that 6,200 Michigan children remain in foster care.

Brian and Kim Gerber of Battle Creek were adopting their ninth child on Tuesday when Brittney, 17, became an official member of the family.

Kim Gerber said she is a third-generation foster parent and she and her husband have continued to adopt many of the children placed in their home.

"And we tend to adopt older children," she said, "even though they sometimes come with more baggage."

"They all need stability and structure," Brian Gerber said. "Sometimes it can be tough at first."

Brittney Gerber said she was happy "because I am part of the family."

And it won't be the last adoption for the Gerbers because in two weeks they will adopt Brittney's sister, Kristina.

After the ceremony, Shawn and Samantha Denton of Bellevue sat with other families for lunch and said they were pleased that two years of interviews and paperwork were finished.

The couple adopted Damon, 2 1/2 and his sister, Gracie, 21 months.

They said working through the system was sometimes difficult and stressful but worth it.

"We did it because the kids need the love that they can't always get from their biological parents," Samantha Denton said.



Stephen J. Markman

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Comments by: **psmcmillan** Posted: Wed Nov 22, 2006 9:10 pm
I admire these people so much for doing this. I just hope for two things for these adorable kids.

1. That they do not become a statistic of abused foster kids adopted by disturbed adults.

2. That the biological parents can not come back after several years or months and fight to get them back after they have neglected them.

Good Luck to all the families and do not hesitate to ask for help if you need it. There are services I am sure available to you such as counseling or whatever it may be.

Comments by: **annifranni** Posted: Wed Nov 22, 2006 6:07 pm
It's awesome to see loving families that have opened their hearts to children in our country. So often we see celebrities adopt children from other countries when all along all they had to do was look in their own area to find a child in need. International adoption is a great thing, don't get me wrong, but adoption close to home is a wonderful thing. Congratulations to these new families!

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Trace Christenson/The Enquirer

Todd Harris of Battle Creek holds his son, Jacob, 2 1/2, after the adoption was finalized.


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Trace Christenson/The Enquirer

Todd Harris of Battle Creek holds his son, Jacob, 2 1/2, after the adoption was finalized.

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Trace Christenson/The Enquirer

Brittney Gerber, 17, top left with blanket, leaves with her family after the adoption ceremony.



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